Hopkins Leaves Hospital Bed to Testify; Briggs to Face Letter Inquiry Tomorrow

Phillips, Oil Man, Describes Case as 'Dirty Politics'

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By BLAIR BOLLES.

George N. Briggs, missing key figure in the mystery case of the "Hopkins letter," has telegraphed that he will call at the Justice Department at 10 a.m. tomorrow, Assistant Attorney General Henry A. Schweinhaut disclosed this afternoon. The announcement was made after Harry Hopkins left his hospital bed to appear before the District grand jury investigating the case.

Mr. Hopkins subsequently told newspapermen:

"This letter is a forgery. There is a forger in the picture. I think I know who the forger is."

Mr. Schweinhaut intimated Mr. Briggs would be taken before the grand jury as soon as he arrives at the Justice Department.

The man who published the "Hopkins letter," C. Nelson Sparks, former Mayor of Akron, Ohio, has said that he got the letter from Mr. Briggs, who, in turn, allegedly reported he heard about it from Secretary of the Interior Ickes. Mr. Ickes denied he knew about the letter and suspended Mr. Briggs without pay from the Interior Department, where he was the Secretary's assistant.

Wired From New York.

The telegram from Mr. Briggs originated in New York, although the rumor was that he was in seclusion in Maryland. Mr. Schweinhaut said that a subpoena had been left at Mr. Briggs' house in Fairlington, Va., Tuesday night, but he was not home at the time.

The revelations about Mr. Briggs' implication in the case were made Monday on the floor of the Senate by Senator Langer, Republican, of North Dakota.

Frank Phillips, chairman of the board of the Phillips Petroleum Co., Bartlesville, Okla., also appeared before the grand jury today for 5 minutes and told newspapermen he did not know Mr. Briggs, who allegedly wrote Mr. Sparks in October that Mr. Phillips had the "Hopkins letter"—addressed to Dr. Umphrey Lee, president of Southern Metho-

HOPKINS AFTER GRAND JURY APPEARANCE—Harry Hopkins, White House adviser, is shown in the press room of the Municipal Court Building after he appeared before the grand jury investigating the "Hopkins letter" case.—Star Staff Photo.

dist University, Dallas, Tex. Mr. Phillips said he didn't know Dr. Lee and had never heard of the letter.

"It looks like dirty politics to me," he said. "I'm going back to Oklahoma and raise my pigs and milk my cows."

Appearance Is Surprise.

Mr. Hopkins' arrival at Municipal Court was a surprise. He went there from his bed in the Naval Medical Center, Bethesda, and he returned to the hospital at once.

The presidential adviser's announcement that he believed he knew the identity of the "forger" indicated that the letter mystery might be nearing a climax.

The famous letter, on White House stationery, signed with the name of Mr. Hopkins, states that Wendell Willkie looked like the Republican nominee in 1944. The letter was published in Mr. Sparks' book, "One Man—Wendell Willkie."

Mr. Hopkins turned up at the Municipal Court Building at 11:05 a.m., accompanied by Assistant Attorneys General Schweinhaut and G. Maynard Smith, who are conducting the investigation of the case. The grand jury inquiry was undertaken at Mr. Hopkins' request.

Mr. Schweinhaut, who also has denounced the letter as a forgery, earlier gave another indication that the investigators were closing in on the suspected forger when he said the case was "simple."

Questions Unanswered.

Although Mr. Schweinhaut said the case is "simple," observers asked these questions:

Why was the letter forged?

What is the meaning of "Alamo"?

"Alamo" appears as a code word in some of the correspondence said to have been from Mr. Briggs to Mr. Sparks, and it appeared in the "Hopkins letter" before Mr. Sparks deleted it.

Mr. Sparks at a press conference yesterday maintained Mr. Ickes is connected with the affair. The Secretary, however, has called it "fantastic" and "bizarre" and denied any connection with it.

On the "Alamo" mystery Mr. Sparks urged:

"Hopkins, Lee, Phillips and Ickes should all be questioned closely about the meaning of the word 'Alamo' appearing in the Hopkins letter, and deleted by me from the letter, as published in my book, at the urgent request of Ickes conveyed to me by letter from Briggs

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Letter

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at the last moment before publication. This word in itself may furnish the key to the frantic attempt on the part of these men to disown any connection with the letter and any knowledge of it."

Senator Langer said "Alamo" was a code word meaning an administration move to back Dr. Lee for the Senate against Senator Connally, Democrat, of Texas.

Sparks Issued Statement.

Mr. Sparks issued a 20-page statement yesterday in which he said that certain circumstances about the letter supposedly written by Mr. Hopkins led him "to suspect there may be something to the charge that the purported original is a fake, that it was prepared by Briggs and that it was done at Ickes' suggestion or request."

Mr. Sparks told newspapermen that Mr. Briggs reported to him last October that the "Hopkins letter" then was in the possession of Mr. Phillips.

Mr. Briggs telephoned Mr. Sparks by long distance at 6 a.m. Tuesday, the day after Senator Langer publicized the correspondence to Mr. Sparks. Mr. Sparks said Mr. Briggs "expressed displeasure" that Mr. Sparks had turned over photostats of the correspondence to Senator Langer.

Tells of Briggs' 'Phone Call.

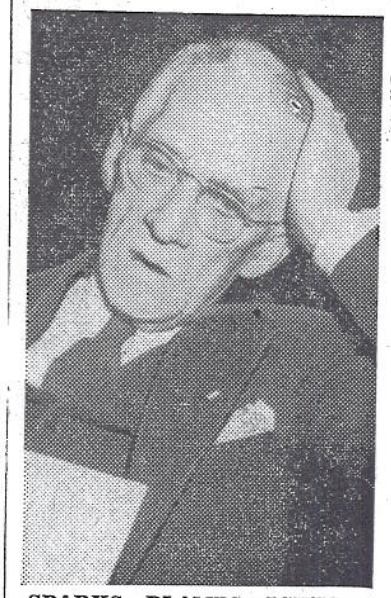
Mr. Briggs also 'phoned Mr. Sparks on January 14, after Mr. Sparks made the first of his two appearances before the grand jury, the Sparks statement said, adding:

"He asked me what happened in the grand jury. I answered, in substance, that I could not tell him, but that if he was called he should tell the truth and not be the goat for anybody, that he had a wife and child to think of."

"Why hasn't Briggs already been brought before the grand jury and required to testify as to each document and its contents?" Mr. Sparks asked in his statement.

By "documents" he meant "all the letters and wires he received from me." He said records of the telephone company "should be subpoenaed to show the long distance calls passing between Briggs and myself from September to December."

Mr. Briggs received $165 from Mr.



SPARKS BLAMES ICKES—C. Nelson Sparks, who published the mystery "Hopkins letter," is pictured at a press conference in the Senate gallery yesterday, when he said he believed Secretary of the Interior Ickes was implicated. Mr. Ickes has denied it.

—Harris-Ewing Photo.

TESTIFIES—Frank Phillips, Oklahoma oil man, shown outside the Municipal Court Building today as he arrived to testify before the District grand jury investigating the "Hopkins letter."

—Star Staff Photo.

Sparks, the latter said—$40 in a loan and $125 to finance a trip from Washington to Dallas, Tex., last October 4 to 9, for the purpose of obtaining the letter, which he said Secretary Ickes had told him about.

Mr. Sparks said that on October 9 Mr. Briggs wrote him:

"Just back late last night—without the letter. However, it will be here next week on the word of Mr. Phillips, who is coming East and will bring it."

The $40 loan has not been repaid, Mr. Sparks said. He was asked why Secretary Ickes might have been believed by him to be involved in the "Hopkins letter" mystery. He said:

"Briggs said the Secretary of the Interior didn't like Hopkins."

"Weren't you surprised Ickes would do a thing like that?" he was asked.

"I've been in politics a long while and I'm not easily surprised."

His prepared statement continued:

"I had always found George N. Briggs to be of the highest integrity, and a good friend. The information he had given me on other subjects ever since I first began associating with him has proved trustworthy. I had no reason in the world to doubt the authenticity of this purported original Hopkins letter, coming to me as it did from Secretary Ickes through Briggs.

Fears Briggs Is Scapegoat.

"It is with regret that I have read of the disclaimers attributed to Briggs, and his attempts to make it appear that all but two of his letters are forgeries. I fear that he is permitting himself, or has been forced, to be made the scapegoat to save face for those who are more

powerfully placed, in order to conceal the true facts from the public, and perhaps also from members of the Administration. The famous cry 'Remember the Alamo,' seems to be replaced by 'Forget the Alamo' in the inner circle of the New Dealers."

Brought Manuscript Here.

Mr. Sparks said he began his book on Willkie early in the summer of 1943 and brought the rough draft to Washington for Mr. Briggs to read. He said he told Mr. Briggs he hoped the latter would be able to supply him with documents and advised Mr. Briggs to tell Secretary Ickes what he was doing. Mr. Briggs reported to Mr. Sparks that he had told the Secretary, who offered no objection.

As his first service for him, Mr. Sparks said Mr. Briggs secured information from Secretary Ickes about how Mr. Willkie obtained the use of an Army bomber for his 1942 flight around the world. The statement goes on:

"Briggs told me that, when Ickes learned I was interested in the Hopkins angle of Willkie's global tour, he asked Briggs to find out whether I would be interested in a letter which Hopkins had written, involving Willkie. Briggs called me about it by long distance telephone and then described the letter to me in a typewritten note."

The description said the note was written on Harry Hopkins' stationery. The letter finally delivered to Mr. Sparks was written on White House stationery. Mr. Sparks said he thought a mistake had been made in the description. The text of the letter carried in "One Man" was from copies of the letter sent by Mr. Briggs.

Mr. Sparks introduced a number of new names into the mystery. Last October, the Sparks' statement says, "Briggs told me that a man named Griscom, representing Senator Connally, was told by a Willkie representative named Rader, of the Texas Light and Power Co., that Willkie would be for Connally; that Hopkins told Lee that Willkie would be for Lee; that Griscom got sore; that both sides are against Willkie, and that then Lee fell out with Hopkins on the Alamo, a personal matter."

Mr. Sparks said that even if the "Hopkins' letter" is determined by the grand jury investigation to be a forgery, the effect of his book will be scarcely reduced because of the other documents it contains. Told that Secretary Ickes said he was an agent for isolationists, Mr. Sparks said he knew no isolationists and that he was a "nationalist," for the United States first.

Mr. Ickes recalled that Mr. Sparks spoke recently before the Republican National Revivalist Committee in Chicago, which the Secretary said was created by Col. Robert McCormick, publisher of the Chicago Tribune and critic of the Roosevelt foreign policy. Mr. Sparks said he was not a member of the committee and addressed it because he would "go anywhere to talk to a Republican group."

The Associated Press reported from Chicago that William J. Grace, secretary of the Nationalist Committee, asked to comment on the Ickes statement and asked if there was a possible connection between the letter and his organization, said:

"Of course, the number one platform announcement of our party was anti-Willkie-ism. The Sparks book was anti-Willkie philosophy and that's the reason we contacted him (Mr. Sparks) to speak at our meeting."

He asserted "anybody who makes the statement about isolationists being opposed to international co-operation is a lair and a fool. * * * We believe in international co-operation based upon the tradition of the United States * * * to alleviate suffering, distress and disaster, * * * but not political co-operation."

Mr. Grace denied Mr. Sparks was an agent of the nationalist organization, or that the organization is sponsored by Col. McCormick.

Although the committee has initiated the "draft McCormick for President" movement, "we do not have now or never have had any contact of any kind with Col. McCormick," Mr. Grace declared.